

PRESIDENT ATTACKS WORLD

Brands Editor Pulitzer as Villifier of the Nation—Panama Canal Charges Are Made the Subject of a Special Message to the Congress.

Washington, December 15.—Repeated peals of laughter greeted the reading of the opening paragraph of the president's message to congress on the Panama Canal charges today. As the secretary read the statement that the charges were "false in every particular," Senator Bailey laughed outright as he was passing along the rear of the chamber to his seat. Other senators on both sides of the chamber joined with him, and when the reader reached the statement that a statement in a newspaper, which he mentioned, would not be believed, there was general merriment from both sides of the chamber.

There was only a small number of senators present when the reading was begun and it was hurried through, the papers accompanying the message not being read at all.

The message elicited the greatest interest in the house of representatives. The members gave close attention during the reading of the document, and there was a ripple of laughter over the president's characterization of Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the New York World. The message, with its accompanying papers was referred to a committee.

Accompanying the president's message was a large bundle of documents bearing upon the transfer of the canal property to the United States. Many of these documents were in French, without English translation. There was nothing which showed directly the persons who received the \$40,000,000 paid by the United States, but there was included a list of about 7,000 stockholders in the old and new Panama Canal companies, all of them citizens of France and of the Colombian Republic. There was not the name of a citizen of the United States in the entire list.

Attack on Pulitzer.

"These stories," the president, in his message, says "were first brought to my attention as published in a paper in Indianapolis, called the News, edited by Mr. Delavan Smith. The stories were scurrilous and libelous in character and false in every essential particular. Mr. Smith shelters himself behind the excuse that he merely accepted the statements which had appeared in a paper published in New York, the World, owned by Mr. Joseph Pulitzer. It is idle to say that the known character of Mr. Pulitzer and his newspaper are such that the statements in that paper will be believed by nobody; unfortunately, thousands of persons are ill informed in this respect and believe the statements they see in print, even though they appear in a newspaper published by Mr. Pulitzer."

Summarizing the charges made in this connection the president says:

"These statements sometimes appeared in the editorials, sometimes in the news columns, sometimes in the shape of contributions from individuals, either unknown or known to be of bad character. They are false in every particular from beginning to end. The wickedness of the slanders is only surpassed by their fatuity. So utterly baseless are the stories, that apparently they represent in part merely material collected for campaign purposes and in part stories originally concocted with a view of possible blackmail. The inventor of the story about Mr. Charles P. Taft, for instance, evidently supposed that at some period of the Panama purchase Mr. W. H. Taft was secretary of war, whereas in reality Mr. W. H. Taft never became secretary of war until long after the whole transaction in question had been closed. The inventor of the story about Mr. Douglas Robinson had not taken the trouble to find out the fact that Mr. Robinson had not had the slightest connection, directly or indirectly, of any kind or sort with any phase of the Panama transaction from beginning to end. The men who attacked Mr. Root in the matter had not taken the trouble to read the public documents, which would have informed them that Mr. Root had nothing to do with the purchase, which was entirely arranged through the department of justice under then attorney general, Mr. Knox.

No Investigation Needed.

"Now, the stories as a matter of fact need no investigation whatever. No shadow of proof has been or can be produced in behalf of any of them. They consist simply of a string of infamous libels. In form they are in part libels upon individuals, upon Mr. Taft and Mr. Robinson, for instance. But they are, in fact wholly, and in form, partly, a libel upon the United States government. I do not believe we should concern ourselves with the particular individuals who wrote the

lying and libelous editorials, articles from correspondents or articles in the news columns. The real offender is Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, editor and proprietor of the World. While the criminal offense of which Mr. Pulitzer has been guilty is in the form of a libel upon individuals, the great injury done is in blackening the good name of the American people. It should not be left to a private citizen to sue Mr. Pulitzer for libel. He should be prosecuted for libel by the government authorities.

"In point of encouragement of iniquity, in point of infamy, of wrongdoing, there is nothing to choose between a public servant who betrays his trust, a public servant who is guilty of blackmail or theft or financial dishonesty or any kind, and a man guilty as Mr. Jos Pulitzer has been guilty in this instance. It is, therefore, a high national duty to bring to justice this villifier of the American people, this man who wantonly and wickedly and without one shadow of justification seeks to blackmail the character of reputable private citizens and to convict the government of his own country in the eyes of the civilized world of wrong doing of the basest and foulest kind, when he has not one shadow of justification of any sort or description for the charge he has made. The attorney general has under consideration the form in which the proceedings against Mr. Pulitzer shall be brought."

The president cites the Act of congress by which he was authorized to pay \$40,000,000 for the canal property, and says it was no concern of the president what the new Panama Canal Company did with the money.

Deal Made by Knox.

"The Panama Canal transaction was actually carried through, not by either the then secretary of State, Mr. John Hay, or the then secretary of war, Mr. Elihu Root, both of whom however, were cognizant of all the essential features, but the then attorney general, Mr. P. C. Knox, at present senator from Pennsylvania. I directed or approved every action, and am responsible for all that was done in carrying out the will of the congress; and the provision of the law enacted by congress after exhaustive examination and discussion were scrupulously complied with by the executive."

The action of the government, he says, was wholly uninfluenced by any question of who were or were not stockholders, either in the new or the old company.

"If, as a matter of fact," he explains, "the canal companies, either or both, had been owned by American citizens or by citizens of any other nationality, it would not have altered in the slightest degree the action taken by this government. Our concern was to get the canal property which was owned by the French company, and to see that the title was clear. Our transactions were carried on openly, and were published in detail, and we dealt solely (so far as the interests of the old Panama Company were concerned) with the liquidator appointed by the proper French governmental body, the Civil Tribunal of the Seine.

Didn't Manage Distribution of Money.

"I wish to make as clear as possible, and as emphatic as possible, the statement that we did not have anything to do with the distribution of a dollar of the \$40,000,000 we paid as regards any stockholder or bondholder of the French companies, save that we followed out the award of the arbitrator appointed in accordance with the decree of the French court, which had dealt with the subject in awarding a certain proportion to the old company and a certain proportion to the new company.

"As a matter of fact, there is nothing whatever in which this government is interested to investigate about this transaction. So far as this government is concerned every step of the slightest importance has been made public by its executive, and every step taken in France has been made public by the proper officials."

The president submitted with the message what he said was a full list of the stockholders of the new company (numbering over 6,000) furnished by Mr. Cromwell, and other papers corroborative of his message.

WORLD ANSWERS ROOSEVELT.

"A Reckless, Unscrupulous Demagogue," it Says—Refers to his "Lamentable Habit of Inaccurate Statements."

New York, December 15.—The World, in the course of its answer to President Roosevelt's references to that paper, in his special message to congress today, says:

"Mr. Roosevelt is mistaken. He cannot muzzle the World.

"While no amount of billingsgate on his part can alter our determination to treat him with judicial impartiality and scrupulous fairness; we repeat what we have already said, that the congress of the United States should make a thorough investigation of the whole Panama transaction, that the full truth may be known to the American people.

"The World fully appreciates the compliment paid to it by Roosevelt in making it the subject of a special message to the congress of the United States.

"The World likewise appreciates the importance of Mr. Roosevelt's statement when he declares to the congress that the proprietor of the World should be prosecuted for libel by the governmental authorities, and that 'the attorney general has under consideration the form under which the proceedings against Mr. Pulitzer shall be brought.'

"This is the first time a president ever asserted the doctrine of lese majeste or proposed, in the absence of specific legislation, the criminal prosecution by the government of citizens who criticised the conduct of the government or the conduct of individuals who may have had business dealings with the government. Neither the king of Great Britain nor the German Emperor would venture to arrogate such power to himself. John Adams's attempt to enforce the sedition law destroyed the Federalist party in America. Yet Mr. Roosevelt, in the absence of law, officially proposes to use all the power of the greatest government on earth to cripple the freedom of the press on the pretext that the government itself has been libelled—and he is the government.

"It is true that the World printed the public reports concerning the Panama canal affair which resulted from William Nelson Cromwell's appeal to the district attorney's office during the recent campaign to prevent the publication of a story which was said to be in the hands of the Democratic national committee. It was Mr. Cromwell's own action which raised the issue in the campaign.

"It is true also that when Mr. Roosevelt made his attack upon Delavan Smith the World called attention to certain statements which Mr. Roosevelt must have known to be false or misleading, and appealed to congress to end all scandal by a full and impartial investigation. If this be treason, let Mr. Roosevelt make the most of it.

"Mr. Roosevelt's lamentable habit of inaccurate statements make it impossible to accept either his judgments or his conclusions. In his message he does not state correctly even so simple a matter as the pretended causes of his grievance. The World has never said that Charles P. Taft and Douglas Robinson made any profits whatever. Mr. Taft denied that he was concerned in the transaction in any way, which denial the World published and accepted. It would have been equally glad to print Mr. Robinson's denial could it have succeeded in obtaining one from him, as it frequently attempted. The World has no evidence that he was associated with Mr. Cromwell, and would accept his word to that effect, for Mr. Robinson is an estimable gentleman of high character, whose reputation for veracity is infinitely better than that of his distinguished brother-in-law.

"If the World has libelled anybody we hope it will be punished, but we do not intend to be intimidated by Mr. Roosevelt's threats or by Mr. Roosevelt's denunciation, or by Mr. Roosevelt's power.

"No other living man ever so grossly libelled the United States as does this president, who besmirches the congress, bulldozes judges, assails the integrity of courts, slanders private citizens, and who has shown himself the most reckless, unscrupulous demagogue whom the American people ever trusted with great power and authority.

"We say this not in anger, but in sincere sorrow. The World has immeasurably more respect for the office of president of the United States than Theodore Roosevelt has ever shown during the years in which he has maintained a reign of terror and villified the honor and honesty of both public officials and private citizens who opposed his policies or thwarted him in his purposes.

"So far as the World is concerned its proprietor may go to jail, if Mr. Roosevelt succeeds, as he threatens; but even in jail the World will not cease to be a fearless champion of free speech, a free press and a free people."

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NOTICE!

The County Board of Commissioners for Newberry county will receive applications for the appointment of a superintendent of the county poor house and farm for the year 1909, the same to be filed with the undersigned by 9 o'clock in the forenoon of December 5th next. The board reserves the right to reject all applications.

H. C. Holloway,
Clerk.

Nov. 16, 1908.

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